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CHINA.

Cholera and plague in province of Kwangtung.

[No. 202.]

CANTON, CHINA, *May 17, 1902.*

SIR: In further consideration of my No. 200, concerning pestilence in the province of Kwangtung, I have the honor to report as follows:

On May 16, I received a report from Rev. Jacob Speicher, of the American Baptist Missionary Union, Kit Yang, reading as follows:

We are having at present a very bad epidemic of the plague at Kit Yang, and it is almost a daily occurrence that dying persons and dead bodies are deposited directly in front of the entrance to our mission compound.

I directed the attention of His Excellency Tao Mu, the viceroy of the two kwangs, to this matter and orders were immediately issued to the Kit Yang magistrate to issue a proclamation forbidding, under severe penalties, the placing of sick or dead persons at or in the vicinity of the mission compound.

From the Rev. Andrew Beattie, of the American Presbyterian Mission, I learned late on the evening of May 15, 1902, that both plague and cholera are epidemic at Tai Leung, in the Shun Tak district. In the district city of Tsang Shing hundreds have died, mostly from plague. So great has been the mortality that coffins have to be ordered from the villages in the neighborhood. The demand for coffins has become so great in some places and the price so high that the coolies who carry the coffins to the hills have an organized plan for stealing coffins. As is known, it often happens that the coffin reaches the grave too late in the day to be put into the grave and covered up. Sometimes it occurs that a coffin will remain beside a grave for days before it is covered. The coolies have taken advantage of this custom and during the night take the body and bury it without the coffin, and the coffin is taken away and sold. This has become very common about Tai Leung.

His Honor Hseuh Yung Nien, confidential interpreter of His Eminence Viceroy Tao, informed me on the morning of May 16, 1902, that bubonic plague is epidemic in the northern and eastern portions of Canton City and also in the suburbs in those quarters. On the same morning I learned through another equally reliable Chinese source that the plague is still raging virulently in Fatshan and that in nearly every case the illness is only of short duration.

Summing up the foregoing information, I cabled as follows to the Department, duplicating my dispatch to United States Minister Conger at Peking:

SECRETARY OF STATE, *Washington, D. C.*: Plague epidemic Kit Yang, Taileung, and Canton.—MCWADE.

As already noted in my previous dispatches, it is an absolute impossibility to obtain anything like even an approximate estimate of the mortality through plague or cholera or both. No mortality statistics are collected or prepared by the authorities, and so far, indeed, as the majority of the officials and the natives generally are concerned, they do not distinguish very clearly between cholera and plague, so that we are often in the dark as to the relative prevalence of either. Both of those diseases are known to the Chinese by the term of pestilence.

Respectfully,

ROBERT M. MCWADE,
United States Consul.

The ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE.